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Causes Solutions Prevention

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| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| | Overdrying. | Put clothes back in dryer. Set control for 15-20 minutes on permanent press or timed cycle. Heat and cool-down period will remove wrinkles. | Remove clothes promptly after tumble drying. Hang or fold. |
| Shrinking | Failure to follow care instructions on labels. | Irreversible condition. | Read and follow care instructions on labels. |
| | Overdrying and too much heat in the drying process. | Irreversible condition. | Reduce drying time and remove clothes when there is a trace of moisture in them. |
| | | | Remove knits, especially cotton, while they are still slightly damp. Stretch back into shape and lay flat to finish drying. |
| | Residual shrinkage. | Irreversible condition. | Many knits and woven fabrics can shrink when laundered. Allow for this when purchasing. Read care labels. |

Reference: Soap and Detergent Association, *Laundering Problems... Causes, Solutions, Preventive Measures*

Adapted for use in South Dakota by Linda Manikowske, Ph.D., Extension clothing and textiles specialist, with permission of authors Dr. Rose Marie Tondl and Carol Thayer, Extension clothing specialists, University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



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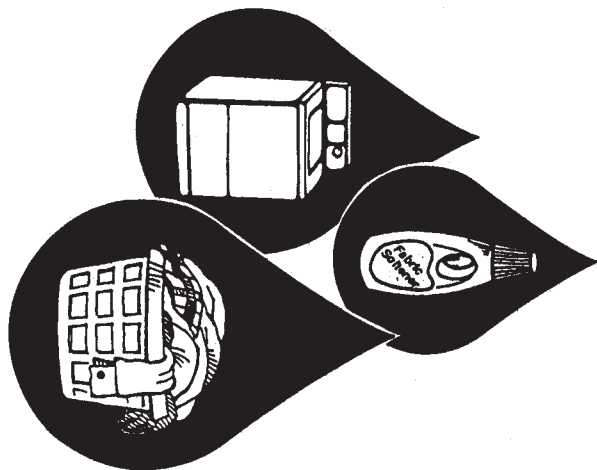
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**SOLVING
LAUNDRY
PROBLEMS**

FS 901-A

Causes
Solutions
Prevention



**Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

SOLVING LAUNDRY PROBLEMS / CAUSES / SOLUTIONS / PREVENTION

| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|--|--|--|--|
| Overall greyness and poor soil removal | Insufficient amount of detergent. | Increase amount of detergent and/or use a detergent booster or bleach. | Use a sufficient amount of detergent. Hard water requires more detergent. |
| | Wash water temperature too low. | Increase wash water temperature. | Wash in hottest water safe for fabric. |
| | Incorrect sorting—soil transfer. | Rewash with an increased amount of detergent and hottest water safe for fabric. Use bleach that is safe for fabric. | Separate heavily soiled items from lightly soiled ones. Use a sufficient amount of detergent, hottest water and bleach safe for fabric. |
| | Color transfer. | Do not dry items. Quickly rewash with detergent and a bleach safe for fabric. Severe damage may be permanent. | Sort carefully by color. Separate white or white background prints that are color-fast, colored pastels in solids and prints, medium and bright colors, and dark colors. If color transfer is suspected, wash item separately. |
| | Soap scum deposits resulting from using soap in hard water. | Rewash using adequate amount of detergent, non-precipitating water conditioner, and bleach that is safe for the fabric. | Use sufficient amount of detergent (not soap) and a non-precipitating water conditioner. |
| | Overloading of washer. | Wash fewer items in a load. | Wash fewer items in a load. Sort clothes by color, fabric and amount of soil. Use proper water level for size of load. |
| Blue stains | Failure of a blue coloring in detergent, laundry aid or fabric softener to dissolve or disperse. | If caused by a detergent or granular laundry aid, add 1 cup white vinegar to 1 quart of water. Use a plastic container. Soak item for 1 hour; rinse. | Add product first, then clothes and start washer. |
| | | If caused by fabric softener, rub stains with bar soap; wash. | Dilute fabric softener before adding to rinse cycle, or to dispenser. Read label directions. |
| Yellowing—Build-up of body soil | Insufficient amount of detergent. | Increase the amount of detergent and/or use a product containing enzymes, detergent booster or bleach. | Use sufficient amount of detergent. |
| | Wash water temperature too low. | Increase wash water temperature. Check water temperature using a thermometer. | Wash in hottest water safe for fabric |

| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|---|---|---|--|
| | <p>Treating synthetic fabrics as "delicate" giving them short, gentle, cool washes.</p> <p>Handwashing synthetic fabrics with a light duty detergent.</p> | <p>Wash in hot water, at least 130°F, using a permanent press cycle (with a cool-down that lowers the water temperature before the first spin). Increase the amount of detergent and/or use a detergent booster or bleach.</p> <p>For extremely discolored synthetics that cannot be bleached with chlorine bleach, soak in a product containing enzymes or a detergent booster. Or treat with a color remover by soaking according to package directions. Then wash in washer.</p> | <p>Laundry frequently and in a washer with water at least 100 degrees F with a laundry detergent.</p> |
| Fabric discoloration | <p>Use of chlorine bleach on silk, wool or spandex items.</p> <p>Pre-wash spray left on fabric too long.</p> | <p>Yellowing cannot be removed.</p> <p>Discoloration may be permanent.</p> | <p>Do not use chlorine bleach on on silk, wool or spandex items.</p> <p>Wash the item shortly after pre-wash treatment. Read and follow directions on pre-wash container.</p> |
| Yellow or brown stains (rust) | <p>Iron and manganese in the water supply.</p> <p>Iron in water pipes or water heater.</p> | <p>To restore discolored load of white clothes, use a rust remover recommended for fabrics. Example: Oxalic acid. Use 1 ounce acid crystals dissolved in 1 gallon water in plastic container. Soak 10-15 minutes Rinse and launder. CAUTION: Oxalic acid is toxic.</p> <p>Same as above. Look for other rust removers on grocery shelves.</p> | <p>Do not use chlorine bleach to remove rust stains. It may intensify discoloration.</p> <p>Use a non-precipitating water softener in both the wash and rinse water to keep the iron in solution.</p> <p>Consider installing water conditioning system.</p> <p>For an on-going problem, install an iron filter in the water supply system.</p> <p>Before washing, run the hot water for a few minutes to clear the line.</p> <p>Drain the water heater occasionally.</p> |
| Stiff, harsh fabrics, colored fabrics look faded, increased fabric wear and abrasion damage | <p>In hard water, some non-phosphate (carbonate) granular detergents can combine with water hardness minerals to form a residue.</p> | <p>Add 1 cup of white vinegar to 1 gallon warm water. Use a plastic container. Soak item and rinse. Or wash in automatic washer using a non-precipitating water conditioner and NO DETERGENT</p> | <p>Use a liquid laundry detergent or use a non-precipitating water softener with a non-phosphate granular detergent.</p> |

| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Greasy, oily stains | Insufficient amount of detergent to hold soil in solution until end of the wash cycle. | Treat with prewash stain remover or a liquid laundry detergent. Increase amount of detergent. | Use a sufficient amount of detergent. |
| | Wash water temperature too low. | Increase wash water temperature. | Wash in hottest water safe for fabric. |
| | Fabric softener—Undiluted liquid softener. Pouring softener directly on clothes | Rub fabric softener stains with bar soap; wash. | Don't pour fabric softener directly on fabrics. Dilute rinse cycle fabric softener before adding to final rinse. |
| | Dryer-added type—Load in the dryer is too small. | Same as above. | Add a few bath towels to the dryer load to provide proper tumbling. |
| | Dryer too hot. | Same as above. | Reduce dryer temperature. Check dryer instruction booklet to be sure dryer is operating properly. When using fabric dryer sheets, start load in a cool dryer. Read label directions. |
| Holes, tears or snags | Incorrect use of chlorine bleach. | Irreversible condition. | Fill washer, add bleach to water, then add clothes. NEVER pour liquid chlorine bleach directly on clothes. Use the bleach dispenser in the washer or dilute with at least four parts of water before adding to the wash water. For powdered bleach, follow package directions. |
| | Unfastened zippers, hooks and belts buckles that readily snag knits, lace and other fabrics. | Irreversible condition. | Fasten zippers, buckles, hooks and eyes before adding to the washer. Protect delicate items by putting them in a mesh laundry bag. Turn knits and delicate fabrics inside out to wash. |
| | Failure to mend rips, tears and broken threads before laundering. | May be irreversible if rips, tears and seams cannot be mended. | Mend any visible damage before washing, especially open seams that will fray and become difficult to mend. |
| | Overloading the washer. | May be irreversible if holes, tears and snags cannot be mended. | Let wash load circulate freely. Use the proper water level for the amount of clothes being washed. |
| | Fabric deterioration caused by sun. | Irreversible condition. | Check items like curtains before washing by gently pulling the fabric to determine condition. If curtains can be washed, use gentle cycle. |

| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|--|---|--|---|
| Lint | Improper sorting; mixing items that give off lint such as sweaters, bath towels, and flannels with synthetics, corduroys, velours and other napped fabrics that attract and collect lint. | To help remove severe lint deposition, hand pat dried item using masking or transparent tape. Rewash with detergent and use fabric softener in the final rinse. Dryer dry. | Wash items that give off lint in separate loads from synthetic or napped fabrics. Turning lint collectors inside out may help. Sort loads by color. Wash very heavy lint shredders such as blankets, chenille bedspreads or rugs separately. |
| | Tissues in pockets. | Remove tissues and wash items. | Check pockets and remove tissues before laundering. |
| | Overloading of washer or dryer. | Wash and dry fewer items in a load. | Same as solution. |
| | | Use proper water level for size of load. | Same as solution. |
| | Insufficient amount of detergent. | Increase amount of detergent in order to hold lint in solution during the wash time. | Same as solution. |
| | Clogged washer lint filter. | Clean washer lint filter. | Clean filter after each use. |
| | Overdrying in a dryer that creates a buildup of static electricity in synthetic fabrics. | Rewash and use a fabric softener in the washer or dryer or use a detergent containing fabric softener in the wash. | Use fabric softener in washer or dryer to reduce static attraction of lint to synthetics. |
| | | Remove items from the dryer while they are slightly damp. | Same as solution. |
| | | Consider line drying | |
| | Dryer lint screen is full. | Rewash clothes. Dry in dryer with a cleaned lint screen. | Clean lint screen after each use. |
| Pilling (fibers break off the surface, ball up and cling to the surface rather than break off like natural fibers) | Some synthetic and permanent press items have a natural tendency to "pill". This is due to abrasion from normal wear and is commonly found on socks, sweaters, collars, cuffs, underarm areas or any other portion subjected to abrasion. | Lint may be attracted to the little balls. To remove the lint, use a lint brush or roller with masking or transparent tape. | Pilling is a wear problem which cannot be prevented completely. It is a natural characteristic of fabrics made of long staple fibers. More noticeable on synthetic and permanent press fabrics. |
| | | | Turn garments wrong side out when washing to reduce abrasion on outer surface. |
| | | | Use a fabric softener in the washer or fabric finish on collars or cuffs. |

| Problem | Causes | Solutions | Preventive Measures |
|---|--|---|--|
| | | | When ironing, use a spray starch or fabric finish on collars and cuffs. |
| Color fading/removal | Excess/unstable dye. | Irreversible condition. | Read care label on item; it may not be washable Test item for colorfastness before washing. Wash new items separately the first few times to remove excess dye. |
| | Water too hot for colored fabrics. | Irreversible condition. | Use warm to cool water for colored fabrics. |
| | Improper use of bleach. | Irreversible condition. | Read labels on bleach before using. Test item for colorfastness before using chlorine bleach. (To test, use diluted bleach solution on an inside seam or facing.) Use an oxygen bleach. |
| | Undiluted bleach applied directly to fabric. | Irreversible condition. | Do not pour undiluted bleach directly on clothes. Follow directions on package label. |
| Residue or streaks of powder particularly noticeable on dark or bright colors | Undissolved detergent. | Add detergent to the washer first, then clothes and start washer. | Use a liquid laundry detergent. |
| | Some non-phosphate granular detergents can combine with water hardness minerals to form a residue. | Add 1 cup of white vinegar to 1 gallon warm water. Use a plastic container. Soak item and rinse. Wash in automatic washer with a non-precipitating water conditioner and NO DETERGENT. | Increase water temperature using hottest water safe for fabric. Do not overload the washer. Use a liquid laundry detergent or use a non-precipitating water softener with a non-phosphate (carbonate) granular detergent. |
| | | | |
| Wrinkling of synthetic/permanent press fabrics | Failure to use correct cycle. | Use permanent press cycle on washer and dryer if available. If not, use warm wash and a slower or shorter spin speed. Use cold rinse. Remove items promptly from dryer; hang or fold. | Same as solution. |
| | Overloading of washer and/or dryer. | Allow wash load to move freely in washer and/or dryer. | Do not overload washer and/or dryer. Use fabric softener. |